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ABSTRACT

Most Americans continue to place great faith in the social capacity of the public school system and to displace onto the schools responsibility to resolve some of our most urgent social issues. Israel was selected for observation in order to view American "educational messianism" from a distance. Cultural displacement as practiced in the United States seemed clearly a nonaffordable luxury for a nation under siege from hostile surrounding nations. Israel was found to be a society that places far less emphasis on the practical importance of schooling overall than does the United States. No one expressed a strong belief in the school's social efficacy comparable to that commonly held in the United States. The imperfect Israeli community includes, but does not single out, its schools in holding itself "accountable" for the resolution of Israel's manifold social problems. Americans must do the same and regain their lost sense of genuine cultural community, recognizing that schools need to be seen as an important part of the educative effort of the total community but that they should cease to be seen as the only source of significant education in today's society. (MLF)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

# "American Educational Messianism: A View from a Nation Under Siege"

by

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## Introduction

There was a time, prior to 1970 when, like many other Americans, I looked to education as the great hope for society riddled with civil discontent and enfeebled with moral decay. However, by the mid-seventies, I had become nearly convinced that the American school's social efficacy, or power to ameliorate major social problems had been seriously over-estimated. This period will be remembered as the aftermath of the Great Society debacle when the nation had pinned its hopes for the future on legally-mandated, or "engineered" educational reforms,

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such as mandated busing for school desegregation, compensatory education for the "disadvantaged," alternative schooling within the public sector, community control, "scientific" curriculum reconstruction, and the like.

Apparently, few others within the education profession or among the general public had yet come to share my realization about the school's limited social power. Indeed, not only did educational Marxism flourish on the extreme American Left as late as 1980, but the American Right had made strong inroads on the schools with such panaceas for our nation's seeming decline as a world power as "accountability," (e.g.,CBTE), indoctrinative "moral education," "back-to-basics," and textbook censorship. Today, there is little doubt that radically neo-conservative and even neo-reactionary educational ideologies have largely subdued and contained liberal/reform and radical/revolutionary conceptions of the American school's social efficacy and mission.

Whether the current ideological state of affairs within public education will prevail much beyond the demise of the Reagan administration or there will be a pendulum swing back to a more liberal education climate once again is anyone's guess. The point is that most Americans living in the mid-1980's continue to place great faith in the social capacity of their system of public

schooling. They regard their schools almost as a "secular messiah."

This assertion is made even though of late the professional literature has been replete with warnings about the public's disillusionment with, and loss of faith in the power of schooling to do good works. I believe that the warnings are baseless; they can more accurately be translated to mean that, justifiably or otherwise, the public is angry at the schools for not having lived up to its highly exaggerated expectations of their utilitarian capabilities. Far from having lost faith in formal education as a panacea for America's most urgent social problems, the American people seem willing to give "one last chance" to their schools to prove themselves as the redeemers of a confused and troubled society. Witness the happy acceptance of the promise held forth in the ideologically conservative "Nation at Risk" report of 1983. If the schools do not live up to the nation's expectations of them; if they do not fulfill their "promise", they will be "crucified" as a "false messiah" or, more likely, simply abandoned--with all that will mean financially and normatively for the institution.

There is a vast scholarly and popular literature bearing on this subject of "American educational messianism." I have scoured a considerable portion of that

literature in the course of preparing to write a book about the phenomenon. The central hypothesis to be developed therein is that our near-universal faith in the "redeemer" role of the school is largely a function of what might be termed a "cultural displacement syndrome." That is to say, we Americans increasingly "displace" onto the public schools our anxieties about confronting the difficult problems of the future head on, thereby justifying our inactivity by rationalizing that they are being dealt with in a responsible manner. Such displacement of responsibility allows us to subconsciously deny our fear of taking concrete steps to resolve some of our most urgent social issues--for example, continuing racism, poverty, inequality, alienation, declining productivity, etc. This culture-wide denial is quite neurotic, in a clinical sense.

Before embarking upon the actual writing of such a book, it seemed advisable to move out of the encapsulating sphere of ideological hegemony supporting the claim that schools possess "messianic" attributes. I wanted to view American educational messianism from a distance, hoping thereby to gain a crystal clear picture of the global structure of the phenomenon, difficult to obtain from the inside where I was surrounded by true believers

everywhere I turned.

I selected Israel as the ideal society in which to test my ideas for several reasons: First, because the messianic idea orginiated in the Middle East, and still prevails there among certain segments of the population. Therefore, my grasp of the concept as applied metaphorically to education would presumably be greatly enriched. Secondly, because, in many ways Israel is similar to the United States--which exerts a powerful influence upon it; it is relatively progessive, culturally pluralistic, idealistic, and modern. (Both are "post-industrial" societies in a number of respects.) The similarities between the two interdependent nations would, I believed, give me a fairly reliable basis for comparing educational values and beliefs. Thirdly, and most importantly, in contrast to the United States, Israel is essentially a garrison state, a state under siege from hostile surrounding nations. Such a nation must, however, reluctantly, "live directly" or else perish. There are no two ways about it. Cultural displacement as practiced in the United States seemed clearly a non-affordable luxury for a nation under siege. The question was whether we could afford such a luxury for much longer either.

In short, I wanted to find out how much faith the "people of the book," so long directly associated with messianic movements, places in their own schooling system today as they struggle to literally stay afloat militarily, economically, and socially. To what extent do modern Israelis value formal education for its utility in resolving pressing social problems, as compared with contemporary Americans? The answers to such questions would, I felt, provide important clues about our own apparent obsession with the pragmatic outcomes of the schooling process. They would help to confirm or disconfirm my hypothesis about the latent socio-psychological functions served by the phenonmenon of educational messianism in post-industrial America.

Hence, a one-semester sabbatical leave to study in Israel was arranged for the Fall of 1983.

The Israeli Educational Context

Ironically, my first intimation of what was to come arose from a preliminary private correspondence with an Israeli professor of education at a religiously-oriented university. She wrote me in no uncertain terms that she thought Americans were one of the most educationally naive people in the world in terms of their exceptionally high utilitarian expectations of their schools and teachers. According to this professor, the major "redemptive" power of schooling resides in its potential to bring a

person closer to his or her God; i.e., from her point of view, the American secularist notion of educationally-based social reform and change was absurd.

This negation of our conception of the secular redemptive power of schooling was reinforced over and over during my ten weeks in Israel. Although in my reading and conversations with many individuals in all walks of life, I found a variety of views concerning the nature and purpose of formal education, nowhere did I encounter anyone who expressed a strong belief in the school's social efficacy comparable to that commonly held in the United States. If, indeed, the early Zionist founders of the state had possessed grandiose visions of formal education's leadership role in national development, such visions have long since been put aside for economic, political, and demographic reasons.

Many modern Israelis,including most politicians, industrialists, labor unionists, and professional educators appeared to value the role of higher education in training the intellectually superior student for science-based careers believed vital to the defence and upgrading of a post-industrial nation under siege; e.g., engineering, mathemathics, nuclear physics, agronomy, etc. There is much concern being expressed currently in the press about the fact that "too many" of the students accepted by the university system want to study human-

ities and the social sciences while far too few are interested in becoming engineers or computer specialists.

Diametrically opposing these ardent secular-nationlists, there is a hardcore and growing segment of the population that denigrates the immediately utilitarian function even of higher education. These religiously orthodox Israelis feel that study of scholarly analyses of holy literature is the major avenue to spiritual communion with God in the traditional Jewish sense.

But, both career training and religious scholarship at the level of advanced education--despite their blatent differences--have in common manifest goals vastly different from the American notion of utilizing public elementary and secondary schools for the explicit purpose of resolving major social problems. Indeed, I found Israel to be a society which places far less emphasis on the practical importance of schooling overall than does the United States; this notwithstanding the pro forma protestations of certain government officials and other educational representatives with whom I spoke and the official policy of the Israeli government based on legislation passed by the Knesset first in 1949 and updated regularly through 1979.

To begin with, elementary and secondary school teachers are practically all women in contemporary Israel; teaching has become "feminized" because the salaries are

pathetically low even by American standards, and because women in this still somewhat chauvinistic society are considered "inherently nurturant" while men are "needed for more demanding and important work" which pays a higher salary. Recent efforts to "upgrade" the status of teachers have thus far failed abysmally.

Elementary school teaching as an occupation is considered to require only what we might term an advanced "normal school" preparation in special teachers colleges. The university schools of education are predominantly graduate schools for the training of some secondary teachers, educational specialists, and researchers.

The state of Israel operates a compulsory system of tax-supported public secular, as well as public religious schools from which parents may choose to send their children from ages five to sixteen (roughly comparable to the "voucher" system that American educators are currently debating). Most parents select the public secular schools for their children. There are also private schools of various kinds available from pre-school through grade twelve. Owing principally to the diversity of schools available to meet the demands of a heterogeneous society, there is no standard curriculum as we know it in America. However, students attending publicly-supported schools, whether secular or regligious, are required to pursue certain core subjects, such as the

Bible, history, mathematics, etc. The schooling system in this offically Jewish state is, from the American point of view, "segregated." Arab and Christian minorities send their children to separate schools of their own taught by men and women of the same ethnicity and religion. No one, however, is unduly concerned about this separatist policy's encouraging "social divisiveness" in a plural society. (It is interesting to note that Jewish children must take Arab and English as second and third languages, and Moslem and Christian children take Hebrew and English as auxiliary languages; "trilingual education" is the norm.)

As an American, I was initially disturbed at learning of the low status of the Israeli teaching profession, the fact that practically all teachers and school administrators are women, that Jewish and non-Jewish children were segregated in schools of their own, etc. In talking with several officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Jerusalem, I pointedly expressed some of my concerns. They politely avoided making an issue of my apprehensiveness, either by turning to another topic or, as in one instance, smiling indulgently and referring to the "political realities" of life in a developing nation.

Eventually, I learned to look at the Israeli educat-

ional context with a less judgmental eye; I became more objective, as befits a serious student of another culture. Ultimately, I acquired an outsider's appreciation of much about Israeli education; and, as shall become evident shortly, now believe with the retrospective of time and distance that we in the United States may indeed profit from the example of the Israelis in several respects.

Who, after all, was I to be affronted by conventions which would be considered intolerable in my own culture? For instance, do Israeli teachers themselves complain that they are grossly underpaid? As a rule, no; although if they are exploited beyond a certain point, they have no compunction about organizing to demand redress of their grievances. They rationalize far less than we do about the "ethics" of going on strike over an obvious and blatent injustice. But, on the other hand, they do not complain incessantly about minor inconveniences and trivial everyday problems that distract many American teachers. Such inconveniences are "inevitable" in the workplace just as they are at home (where the cost of electricity is one-third of an average family's monthly income) and everywhere else in this young nation. Furthermore, it must be remembered that teaching is considered a woman's job by practically everyone. The low salaries earned correlate with quite favorable working conditions and relatively little emotional stress or public pressure,

as compared with the United States. Those who cannot handle what role strains the work does entail (particularly at the secondary level) are not likely to seek teaching credentials in the first place or remain long in the occupation. Teaching is understood to be a good second-income job with excellent hours and long vacations, and that is that. Many teachers are employed on a part-time basis, in order that they can spend more time at home with their own children.

This is not to suggest that all is perfect. As noted earlier, there have been recent efforts to upgrade the occupation, but they have generated insignificant interest to date, in part due to the public's preoccupation with sheer military, economic, and intergroup survival. But, even were these fundamental priorities to be miraculously resolved, I suspect that little serious change would take place in teaching, because the overriding function of formal education of the young is not likely to be altered significantly; it is unlikely to ever become widely perceived of as a highly utlitarian enterprise in the way Americans perceive of public education below the college level. The European and "Oriental" (principally North African, Iranian, and Iraqian) influence, with its stress on academic purity and teacher autonomy is too perasive for that--particularly beneath the official

surface of educational governance.

In schools with large numbers of what American educators currently term "culturally different" youngsters (primarily "Oriental" children whose parents have recently immigrated from African or other Eastern countries--a rapidly growing segment of the school population due to changing immigration patterns and the comparatively large size of their families), school social workers are readily available to work with teachers of "delinquents" and "trouble-makers." If the social worker cannot make headway with a "difficult" student, the latter is likely to be expelled from school prior to graduation. In addition, many Oriental teenage girls marry at fourteen or fifteen and leave school to become housewives, mothers, and members of the unskilled or semi-skilled labor force.

In general, students at both elementary and secondary public schools that I visited seemed enormously free and happy in comparison with American students. There was a "permissiveness" in most classrooms observed that Americans would typically find intolerable except, perhaps, in some "country-club" schools for the upper-middle classes. Yet, in one slum school in Tel-Aviv where I spent a morning, the economically and "culturally" disadvantaged students of oriental background were busily learning to read, write, compute, draw, and solve problems, all in

crowded classrooms (thirty-five to forty children) with a high noise level managed by affable, easygoing teachers who were clearly enjoying themselves as much as the children were. The students had absolutely no inhibitions about demonstrating their newly learned knowledge and skills to me, my sabra guide, or their German-born and non-English-speaking principal.

The same relaxed geniality pervaded a middle-class "Ashkenazi" (European origin) high school in Jerusalem. Teachers and students alike were either lounging informally around outside of class--some preparing to leave for a week of pre-military training in the Negev--or comfortably interacting in their respective roles inside of class. Teachers and school director were called by their first names by the students at this large urban high school. As an aside, an armed Israeli soldier stood in the front entranceway. Initially, I assumed that he was guarding the building (there had been several bomb threats in Jerusalem recently). It turned out that he was an eighteen year old member of the paratroopers proudly returning to his high school to visit one of his favorite teachers and show her how well he had turned out.

At one of two kibbutz schools that I visited during my stay in Israel, my guide, a leader of the commune, smoked a cigarette in the classroom where pre-school children were engaging in learning activities and in

the shower room where three youngsters were being bathed by their "metapalet" (nurse). He told me that it was alright to smoke my pipe, but I was unable to go that far due to my Victorian cultural conditioning.

Finally, It became apparent to me in traveling around the country and several of its cities that school-aged children and adolescents, on the average, spend more time even than American school children in non-school socializing with their peers; for instance, engaging in the many organized sports available, walking interminably around downtown, eating kosher pizzas and non-kosher falafel at outdoor stands, attending movies and rock concerts, and so on. One gains the impression that most do even less homework than American youngsters. But, it should be remembered that only about twelve percent of all high school graduates are accepted by the eight universities in the country; apparently, the remaining majority do not yet feel sufficient urgency about a prestigeous career to sacrifice their youthful energies on the extra-school study demanded to pass the rigorous entrance requirements. The suicide rate among adolescents and young adults is negligible. Upon leaving school and completing military service, there is suitable work for everyone who wants a job; and there is life beyond the job in this vibrant society, particularly in the extended family and more generally in the

pervasive feeling that something exciting is going on--that a new nation is being constructed, one which requires the willing participation of each and every citizen.

An Interpretation

My point in describing these formal and informal observations and experiences is to demonstrate the lack of frenetic urgency and anxiety that almost all of the Israelis I met displayed about schooling, teaching, and learning. The overall impression I received from my reading, my varied interviews, and my observations was, to repeat, one of far greater acceptance of the non-utilitarian role of schooling in Israel in comparison to the average American's deep faith in schooling as a significant--therefore carefully monitored--instrument of individual and social development and change. In contrast to the Israelis we seem clearly "afraid" to relax and let our elementary and secondary schools--and increasingly our colleges and universities--proceed in terms of the "spontaneous rhythms" which, I believe, are "indigenous" to schools and classrooms wherever they are to be found throughout the world.

We constantly attempt to impose a necessarily distorted urgency and artificial rhythm on our schools and classrooms

in the irrational fear that, otherwise, they will fail to reach every last student. Such an imposition, supposedly, will enable our schools to create unaided a highly competent, loyal, and well-integrated citizenry and to bring about desired social reforms of either a progressive or retrogressive nature. We take our lower schools, especially, far "more seriously" as important tools for accomplishing specifiable objectives than do the Israelis; for, as I maintain, we have invested them with "messianic" attributes. In short, we expect miracles from our public schools; the Israelis look for their "miracles" elsewhere, expecting only modest demonstrable results of the schooling process, with a small percentage of the student body ultimately attaining advanced academic credentials and other certifiable advantages from the process. For the vast majority of youngsters, going to elementary and secondary school is simply a regularized activity--part of the inevitability of trying to grow up with their peers in the modern world, some of whom will become their lifetime comrades and friends after they have left school, entered the military, and gone to work.

The frenzied anxiety about "every child a winner," etc., that we in the post-industrial United States display is not an obsession in post-industrial Israel.

Naturally, some children will be "winners" and some "losers", but the terminology itself is inappropriate. According to the prevailing zeitgeist, most will eventually turn out to be what most people everywhere may realistically expect to become--imperfectly socialized and enculturated to the ways of Israeli society with the help of an unpretentious schooling process guided by unharried, yet (in my opinion) highly "competent" teachers who greatly enjoy their work. As adults, these products of the Israeli schooling system will be able to go about their daily lives in an extraordinarily demanding social order under constant siege without the gnawing compulsiveness and restlessness that most modern Americans are increasingly experiencing in their relatively safe and non-demanding society. They will make large and small mistakes along the road of life, yet few of them will blame the formal educational system for producing a nation of mostly ordinary, imperfect mortals who make mistakes in life. The ideology of educational messianism does not enjoy cultural hegemony in Israel as it does in the United States.

And yet this seemingly haphazardly-reared people is capable of becoming superlatively disciplined at a moment's notice. The highly regarded (even by its opponents) Israeli Defense Force (IDF) most spectacularly

symbolizes and epitomizes this capability of coming to order and "getting the job done" when deemed necessary. And well it should, since Israel is, after all, precariously situated geographically and demographically; therefore, it must maintain a dependable and respectable military stance at all times. An instance of this capability for preparedness was observed when, while staying on a kibbutz in the Galilee, the government called a practice mobilization of soldiers. So it was that at 4:30 p.m. one day while a party was being held in honor of the first telephones to be installed connecting the kibbutz with the outside world, a messenger came into the hall and announced the drill. Immediately, all the young men and unmarried women rose from their places, made their goodbyes, left the hall to pick up their weapons, and were driven away in trucks to a previously-arranged site in southern Lebanon. There they remained overnight. At sunrise the following day, they were returned to the kibbutz where they resumed their work on their tractors, in the turkey sheds, or in the commune's furniture manufacturing plant.

A few more illustrations of this capability for discipline and preparedness: People stood literally for hours in the bank patiently waiting their turn to cash their weekly paychecks; they did the same in the

few always crowded supermarkets. They argued fiercely and often articulately about politics and religion, without coming to physical or emotional blows; only recent immigrants from the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. seem to display the kind of raging fanaticism for which the police may occasionally be called in. There is enormous tolerance for difference of opinion in this tiny democratic republic. Even during the Lebanon fiasco when Israelis and Druzes (members of a religious sect which split from Islam in the eleventh century, and do compulsory service in the IDF along with their Jewish peers), as well as American marines were being slaughtered by terrorists' bombs, citizens wrote letters to the editor of the Jerusalem Post urging the government to abandon what they considered a lost and even immoral cause. Needless to say, such letters represented a highly unpopular viewpoint reminiscent of our early Vietnam days, but they were published with impunity. Was this tolerance perhaps learned at least in small part in Israeli classrooms directed by easygoing, underpaid female teachers who do not assign enough homework? One may aridly speculate that perhaps citizenship education is not guaranteed by CBE and behavorial objectives, as many Americans want desperately to believe. One further conjectures that genuine moral education was not

invented by a Harvard psychologist named Kohlberg who was influenced by Piagetian developmental stage theory. Most importantly for a nation under siege, perhaps the inculcation of patriotism and willingness to be under stringent military discipline from age eighteen to twenty-one or more (able-bodied men can be recalled to active military duty until they reach the age of fifty-five and women until thirty-four) are the responsibility not only of formal education institutions, but far more completely that of every member of the organic community--ranging from parents and neighbors to friendship groups to storekeepers and bus drivers to the mass media and government officials to disputatious ideologues to factory employers and union leaders.

The imperfect Israeli community, including but not singling out its schools, holds itself "accountable" for the resolution of Israel's manifold social problems. Because it is an intrusive entity in the largely Moslem Mideast, formed and developed primarily by the efforts of persecuted castoffs of other societies, Israel knows more than most nations that it cannot afford the luxury of displacing its need for social-self reliance onto a single social institution be it the school, the institution of psychotherapy, or any other. It is acutely aware that never again can its people rely upon the book alone

for earthly salvation--spiritual redemption, perhaps; but not societal. Neither the school nor any other single agency or individual can be permitted to play the role of secular messiah.

Redemption in this world, at least, is for the self-reliant, interacting members of the holistic and goal-oriented community. As I was informed more than once, "We cannot afford to lose another war. Therefore, we must work together, not allow others to act on our behalf."

What the United States Can Learn from Israel

The message for America, another troubled society--albeit in far less immediately precarious circumstances than Israel--is easily legible to one who spent ten weeks there recently. My view of American society and education has been greatly clarified by that relatively short visit to a beleagured nation. In spite of our acknowledged sociocultural differences from Israel, there is no longer any doubt in my mind that it is time now to stop asking our schools to, for all intents and purposes, solve our major problems of individual opportunity and social cohesiveness for us. It is time to quit expecting schools to lead the rest of society in reducing the crime rate, lowering the incidence of venereal disease, and resolving

racial/ethnic antipathies. Schools should cease being asked to almost single-handedly strengthen patriotic values or to equalize the opportunities of members of minority groups who have been unjustly treated in the larger society. Schools as institutions simply lack the efficacy, or social power to do such things. Nor can schools, alone, solve the drug and alcohol problems besetting our stress-ridden and boring social order or produce more efficient assembly-line workers for defunct industries. The American school cannot raise the general level of morality in this culturally diverse land either through inculcating official platforms of "universal" ethical principles, as some districts have recently ordered or through Constitutionally-sanctioned prayers, as the President had urged. Schools and teachers will not make the American family flourish once again either in a consanguine or nuclear pattern, because they are not qualified to arbitrate extra-institutional dynamics as they have been encouraged to do for the last twenty years.

In short, they will neither restore the lost past that many sentimentalists long for nor will they bring us reinvigorated into someone's or another's idealized image of a bright future. They will notdo these things because they cannot!

The most that schools and their teachers here or anywhere else, for that matter can, and, hence, should be asked to do is to offer children and youth the opportunity to strive to acquire civility and humaneness--that is to creatively stimulate the quest for truth. Note the words "strive" and "quest". More than ever since my visit abroad am I convinced that they cannot guarantee even that their civilizing and humanizing efforts will be highly successful. It is enough to try.

The schools exist for those who wish to take advantage of them to become more aware of the complexities of their relationship to their environment, past, present, and future, and more completely actualized as adaptable citizens of American society and the world at large as they evolve. No amount of competency-based instruction, teacher accountability, and similar nostrums dreamed up by educational conservatives on the one hand or "legislated learning" engineered by educational liberals on the other can ensure that all, or even most young people will be "motivated" to learn what excellent schools and the most gifted teaching artists are able to provide. Help, yes; guarantee, no. Certainly the schools and the teachers of our pluralistic society cannot ensure that whatever is, in fact, once learned will, ipso facto, become cultural capital for one or another competing

ideological end-in-view. Many intervening variables come into play to preclude that possibility in our complex and fast-changing social order.

Therefore, the onus for perfecting American life must be taken off the back of the formal education system, and the responsibility for renewing this confused and troubled nation placed once again squarely on the shoulders of all the people. This means that Americans must regain their lost sense of genuine cultural community. They must "reconnect" with each other, and take back what they have displaced onto the school out of neurotic fear and insecurity bred of excessive preoccupation with "getting ahead" in an overly-materialistic and exaggeratedly-"individualistic" society--i.e., social-self reliance.

There is no question that the task of preparing for the difficult future ahead by the self-reliant efforts of interacting members of restored organic communities is, in part, an educative task in its own right. Obviously, we must continually teach each other as we actively engage the prospects of the future. And, just as obviously, schools are integral elements of their communities. They must, therefore, continue to participate in community life, but as one among many dimensions of that life. The great challenge for educational scholars and policy makers is to try to determine what their special role in humanizing and civilizing the new generation is and how they can best

and most efficaciously play that role. But, at all costs, we should cease to insist that schools become the single incarnation of reconstructive educative effort in the socially-self reliant community and society. We need to replace this wrongheaded notion with the more meaningful idea of the holistically educative community.

In sum, it is past time to return to a conception of society in America based upon interpersonal, intergroup, and interinstitutional give and take. It is time to recognize that in the modern age as in the past, a variety of educative influences in addition to schools are called for in the making of an individual and his or her world. Today these include especially the mass electronic media, energy and consumer movements, neighborhood revitalization efforts, our superb system of national and state forests and parks, organized participation sports, new party politics challenging the ossified interest group politics of the past, new ethical-spiritual developments symbolized in contemporary art as well as religion, and, of course, the radical democratization of the workplace both in the private and public sectors. The possibilities for variegated educational opportunity are virtually endless, only to be hinted at herein.

The point is that the schools of the interperson-centered democratic society that I have been advocating throughout this paper cease to be seen as the only source

of significant education. They no longer are perceived as the secular messiah designed to eradicate poverty, crime, and mental illness and in other ways to save a society in crisis unaided. As in Israel, another society in even deeper crisis than our own, schools need to become one very important component of a broader educative effort founded on the recognition that democratic problem solving, formation of acceptable social self concepts and long-term personal identity, and positive movement into the future are interrelated essentials of a total community endeavor. Schools in the educative community-society offer young people an opportunity to struggle to learn some of what they may need to know in order to participate meaningfully and self-fulfillingly in organized human life at all levels.

Educational messianism has become a futile and dangerously escapist cultural universal in post-industrial America. It displaces--masks--our collective anxieties as a fragmented people confronted by unremitting forces of change. The powerfully hegemonic influence of this unhealthy ideology needs badly to be replaced with a more "organically rhythmic" conception of the schools' valuable but limited mission and role in self reliant community-societal endeavor as we face forward to the awesome problems of the uncharted future.

As indicated at the outset, I journeyed to the Mideast to, in effect, test the above hypothesis. It has been amply confirmed, strengthened by the experience of intimate living in a nation under siege and of viewing my own nation's educational enterprise from a new and distant perspective.